

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF NEW JERSEY

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NEWS RELEASE

News Release

Release Time: Saturday, A.M.

The A.C.L.U. today criticized as "petty police state bureaucrats" Newark Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio and Newark Police Chief Dominick A. Spina for their failure to publicly disclose the full extent of secret police tapings of public hearings and to give their assurance that such tapings would not take place again in Newark. The criticism was leveled by Robert Tessler, Newark attorney and Chairman of the Essex County A.C.L.U. Chapter, who revealed that the A.C.L.U. had complained of the secret tapings conducted by the Police at the Central Planning Board Hearing in Newark at the City Council Chambers on June 13. The police operation was accidentally discovered by George C. Richardson, the former Essex Assemblyman, as he was called to the telephone in the Council's anteroom.

The A.C.L.U. criticism came after letters to Addonizio and Spina calling for disclosure of past activities and a public promise not to further engage in secret tapings went unanswered. In the letters the A.C.L.U. said:

"The American Civil Liberties Union strongly condemns the practice of the Police Department in secretly taping public proceedings. The compiling of a record before a public body is a most inappropriate activity for the Police Department. Secretly or not, the Department can never justify recording the political activity of its citizens. This is especially true when

they speak before public bodies. This is simply not a police function in a democratic society. Furthermore, the A.C.L.U. believes that governmental activities in a democratic society should be conducted in an aboveboard and open-handed manner. Only the gravest supervening necessity can justify secret operations by any governmental official. Here, there was no such justification."

After calling for the assurances the A.C.L.U. letters concluded:

"Only by such actions can you dispel the notion that the City of Newark has not unwittingly taken a long stride to becoming a police state."

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(2)